A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

At Sierra, our goal is to provide the best possible entertainment for your personal computer. This letter describes the use of add-on cards which greatly enhance the ability of your PC to produce music, and Sierra's support of these cards.

Sierra is not a hardware development company and has no intention of becoming a hardware development company; but, we *do* know a good thing when we hear it. Roberta and I are very excited about the possibilities these cards present to us as makers of computer software.

As sound cards for IBM are a new item for computers that work under MS-DOS, you will not likely find information on them in the computer magazines. The following should give you some basic buying information.

What is a Music Card?

Several companies manufacture add-on cards for your personal computer (PC) that elevate its musical abilities well beyond those offered by any major microcomputer sold today.

In fact, these cards are actually electronic musical instruments designed for use by professional musicians and adapted to interface with your computer. They can be used to make your computer into a tool for music composition and performance.

Sound cards can also be used to play music by entertainment and educational software. For instance, when you play the adventure game *King's Quest IV* on a computer with a sound card in it, you will hear a sophisticated musical soundtrack, right out of the movies, as you play the game instead of the beeps and boops that you'll hear on a normal PC system.

There is no necessity in your having one of these cards in order to enjoy your Sierra product. Just as a Sierra game can be played in either color or monochrome it can be enjoyed with or without enhanced stereo music. The difference is in the level of enjoyment you want to experience.

If you don't mind playing a game on a black and white screen, the addition of a sound card to your machine is probably not important to you. If, on the other hand, you bought an EGA card and monitor just so you could play King's Quest III or Space Quest in color (don't laugh, I've received letters from many users that did), then a sound card could be a worthy addition to your computer.

In my mind, I see the decision of whether or not to purchase a card as analogous to the introduction of the color TV. I remember being quite satisfied for many years watching black-and-white TV; but, when I saw my first color TV it was a tremendous difference. There was no turning back. Was the incremental cost worth it? To me it was.

What Software is available for Music Cards?

As sound cards for MS-DOS machines are a rather new concept, there is not much software yet available, but that should change over the next year or so.

Most of Sierra's new products support music cards, including *King's Quest IV, Police Quest II, Space Quest III, Leisure Suit Larry II* and *Silpheed*. We believe that the score to our "interactive films" is as important a component to the overall experience as the plot or the graphics.

Bundled with the MT-32 and optionally ($50) the Ad Lib is software which allows you to compose your own music. I love to play with this kind of software and I highly recommend it. Even if you never did get the hang of the violin they tried to teach you in elementary school, you shouldn't underestimate your own musical creativity. My children (9 and 14) and I have spent endless hours entering sheet music from popular tunes into the computer. We then re-orchestrate the music to suit our whims. Would the violin solo sound better on French horn? We even experiment with our own original compositions. Although they are far from perfect, they are fun to do, and we didn't have to learn finger placements or how to tune the instrument before we sat down to get creative. We just put some ideas into the computer and played them back. It's family computing at its best.

If you choose the Ad Lib, we highly recommend you consider the optional music composition software.

Which Card should you buy?

Sierra recommends the Ad Lib or MT-32 cards, which cost $200 and $550, respectively. Both are exceptional cards and represent a good value for the money. A third card, from IBM, is also of exceptional quality, and our products do support it, but it carries a high price when compared feature by feature with the Ad Lib or MT-32.

With both cards you will need to output the music to either amplified speakers (such as Bose) or your home stereo. The MT-32 has a much greater range of musical capabilities than the Ad Lib, and thus sounds much better. It also costs more. Whether or not you'll be able to appreciably hear the difference depends largely on the quality of your stereo and personal sense of perfection in music. Either card will add a new depth to Sierra games, in much the way that a good soundtrack accents a good movie.

The most important consideration in your choice between these two cards is that the MT-32 comes with a MIDI interface (MIDI is the computer language of music, and used by most professional music equipment these days). This allows your computer to talk to a musical keyboard and thus extends your ability to use your computer as a real musical instrument. Low cost music keyboards are now available. If you see one in your future then you will want the MT-32 for full MIDI compatibility.

How do you decide if you're interested?

If you *are* interested in learning more about music cards, use the coupon found in this game to request a free audio cassette.* Listen to your Sierra game as it sounds now, then listen to the tape to hear how they sound on the sound cards we recommend. We believe the optional music cards add substantial enjoyment to your use of these products, and will open up whole new creative uses for your computer.

We are extremely proud of the software we create and hope that it brings you the same excitement it does us.

Thank you,

Ken Williams
President
Sierra On-Line, Inc.

*Include $1.95 for shipping and handling.

Ken and Roberta Williams - founders of family-owned Sierra On-Line, Inc.

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